

Have you ever messed up so bad, or so often, that you felt unworthy to call yourself a disciple of Jesus, unworthy to show your face in church?

If you have ever felt this way, you can relate with the Apostle Peter, one of Jesus' closest disciples. He constantly ran ahead of Jesus and made mistakes! **Today, we are talking about the Good News about the way Jesus responds when His disciple's mess up.** Specifically we are looking at the story where Jesus restores Peter by the sea of Galilee in John 21:1-19 NLT.

The story takes place on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, sometime during the weeks after Jesus' Resurrection. Luke tells us, *"During the forty days after he suffered and died, he appeared to the apostles from time to time, and he proved to them in many ways that he was actually alive. And he talked to them about the Kingdom of God."* Acts 1:3 NLT. So Jesus was on the earth for forty days after his resurrection, and at this point in the story, he had appeared to the disciples a few times already.

Let's read the story.

"1Later, Jesus appeared again to the disciples beside the Sea of Galilee. This is how it happened. 2Several of the disciples were there—Simon Peter, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples. 3Simon Peter said, "I'm going fishing." "We'll come, too," they all said. So they went out in the boat, but they caught nothing all night." John 21:1-3 NLT.

Jesus told them earlier, "after I have risen, I will go ahead of you to Galilee and meet you there." Mark 14:27 NLT So here they were, waiting in Galilee. Peter, the one who seemed to always take initiative, decided to go fishing, and the other disciples followed him. What's interesting about this decision to go fishing is that this is what they did for work before Jesus called them to be "fishers of men." Were they simply bored, did they need money while they waited, or were they confused and doubting Jesus and the calling he had placed on their lives? I'm not sure, but what we do know is that they went fishing, and caught nothing all night!

"4At dawn Jesus was standing on the beach, but the disciples couldn't see who he was. 5He called out, "Fellows, have you caught any fish?" "No," they replied. 6Then he said, "Throw out your net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you'll get some!" So they did, and they couldn't haul in the net because there were so many fish in it. 7Then the disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, "It's the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his tunic (for he had stripped for work), jumped into the water, and headed to shore. 8The others stayed with the boat and pulled the loaded net to the shore, for they were only about a hundred yards from shore. 9When they got there, they found breakfast waiting for them—fish cooking over a charcoal fire, and some bread. 10 "Bring some of the fish you've just caught," Jesus said. 11So Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net to the shore. There were 153 large fish, and yet the net hadn't torn. 12 "Now come and have some breakfast!" Jesus said. None of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. 13Then Jesus served them the bread and the fish. 14This was the third time Jesus had appeared to his disciples since he had been raised from the dead. John 21:4-12 NLT.

This must have been incredibly frustrating to have caught nothing after fishing all night long, only to have someone they didn't know ask about their catch, and then have the nerve to give fishing advice.

These were professional fishermen! But then something amazing happened, they listened to the man's advice and ended up catching so many fish they couldn't haul in the net.

What's interesting about this catch is that this is the same way that Jesus had originally invited these disciples to follow him. This must have triggered their memories because John told Peter, "It's the Lord!" And then Peter jumped in the water and swam to shore.

When they all got to shore Jesus was cooking fish and bread over a charcoal fire, and they all recognized him. This was a huge moment for the disciples. **Jesus re-established their faith and their calling by re-enacting the same fishing miracle as he did when he first called them.** This must cleared up any doubts or confusion about Jesus and the calling he had placed on their lives.

But Jesus wasn't finished, there was still something that needed to be resolved with one of his disciples. I wonder if the smell of the charcoal fire reminded Peter of the last time he was standing around a charcoal fire, when he denied knowing Jesus three times in a row? I can only imagine how much shame Peter was feeling. If the fire didn't spark his memory, what Jesus did next definitely would have.

15After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," Peter replied, "you know I love you." "Then feed my lambs," Jesus told him. 16Jesus repeated the question: "Simon son of John, do you love me?" "Yes, Lord," Peter said, "you know I love you." "Then take care of my sheep," Jesus said. 17A third time he asked him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, "Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you." Jesus said, "Then feed my sheep. 18 "I tell you the truth, when you were young, you were able to do as you liked; you dressed yourself and went wherever you wanted to go. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and others will dress you and take you where you don't want to go." 19Jesus said this to let him know by what kind of death he would glorify God. Then Jesus told him, "Follow me." John 21:12-19 NLT.

After they finished breakfast Jesus focused his attention on Peter. He asked Peter three times, "Do you love me more than these?" What's interesting is that Jesus used the Greek word *agape* for love in his first two questions and Peter responded with a different Greek word *phileo* another kind of love. *Agape* is a decision to love someone unconditionally and *phileo* is a mutual decision to love someone as a friend. So Jesus was asking Peter to love him unconditionally, but Peter responded with conditional mutual love. Peter was basically saying, "I will love you if you love me." Then Jesus does something so gracious and kind, he meets Peter where he is by changing the word *agape* to *phileo* in his third question, "Do you love me?".

Peter didn't get it, and was hurt that Jesus asked him the same question about loving him three times. Why did Jesus do this, was he messing with Peter? No, Jesus was giving Peter the opportunity to reaffirm his love after denying him three times in a row.

Jesus went on to tell Peter that in the future Peter would be crucified for his faith in Jesus. And after saying this he invited Peter to follow Him. I think Jesus wanted Peter to understand that following him would require unconditional love to the point of giving up his life.

This was incredibly gracious of Jesus! Jesus could have shamed and rejected Peter for his failure and lack of faithfulness, but instead, Jesus fed him, forgave him, restored him and affirmed his calling. This is the way of Jesus.